CHURCH NEWS

FROM THE NORTHERN COUNTRIES

Edited by
THE NORTHERN ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE
Sigtuna, Sweden

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OF RELIGION

Director: Dr. HARRY JOHANSSON, Sigtuna, Sweden
Editor: Rev. JOHS. LANGHOFF, Øster Egesborg per Mern, Denmark

No. 72 July 6th, 1961.

DENMARK

Methodists Want Greater Equality.

In a statement issued at the annual convention at Randers in June, the Methodist Church in Denmark has demanded greater equality in relation to the Lutheran National Church. It says in the statement: "Occasioned by the current debates on Church and State and the discussion of new Party programmes we wish to express as our opinion that Church and State, as a matter of principle, should be separated.

Furthermore, we should like to have access to teachers' training colleges and public school positions on a par with the men and women belonging to the Lutheran National Church, and we should want the theologians of the Methodist Church to be included in the system of serving as Army Chaplains during their term of compulsary military service. In this connection we refer to the systems in Norway and Sweden.

We should also like to draw attention to the one-sidedness of the religious programmes in the radio and on television."

According to the law, Heads of teachers' training colleges and instructors in religion in the schools in Denmark must be members of the Lutheran National Church.

Traffic Propaganda Sunday in the Churches in the Autumn.

In the near future the Commission on Greater Traffic Safety will request all Danish clergymen to conduct a special "Traffic Sunday Service" in the churches on one of the Sundays in October. At this service the minister is to stress in his sermon or in a special address the responsibility of anyone travelling on the roads. A few days ahead, the Bishop of Copenhagen, Bishop W. Westergaard Madsen, has promised to speak over the radio on the Church in connection with the problems of traffic, and he and the leaders of the Free Church communities have recommended the drive.

Serious Shortage of Clergymen within Five Years.

In a recent radio programme called "Church Magazine", Professor Johannes Munck, Aarhus, said that within five years there will be a serious shortage of clergymen in the Danish Lutheran National Church. According to a survey conducted by the University of Aarhus, there will then be roughly 130 theological graduates too few to meet the demand, and this survey even takes into consideration only the ordinary

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In the autumn a special faculty for professors and veterinary stu-nts from developing countries, predominantly in Africa, will be tablished in Copenhagen at the Royal Veterinary and Agricultural gh School of Denmark. At the moment, the details of the plan are ing discussed by representatives of the F.A.O. and the Danish Parlia-ntary Committee on Technical Assistance.

There will be a 9 months' course for professors and teachers from veloping countries which will include participation in the ordinary nstruction at the Veterinary School and a special course in administ-ation and organization. Undergraduates will be offered a 4-5 years' raining course, starting with a thorough instruction in Danish.

hristian Students' Activities among Students from Developing Countries.

The Student Christian Movement and the Danish Missionary Council ointly have decided to take up work among students from developing ountries staying in Denmark. It has been agreed to letting Rev. Ove rlyck do part-time work during his furlough, and he will now try to et in touch with students from these countries. The plan is to organize nformal social gatherings with other students, to facilitate intercourse ith Danish students, and perhaps to arrange for Danish homes to invite hem as their guests during holidays and week-ends.

o Hospitality to "Jehova's Witnesses"!

The Danish branch of the "Jehova's Witnesses", numbering 10.000-2.000 adherents, is preparing for an international conference in Copen-agen from July 11th-16th which is expected to be attended by a very arge number of foreign guests. In consequence, accommodation for bout 15.000 people will be needed in Copenhagen and environs, and pri-ate homes all over the Capital have been requested to provide beds.

In an editorial the "Kristeligt Dagblad" says it is good that there s freedom of religion in Denmark for even such a peculiar sect as the 'Jehova's Witnesses", but at the same time advises its readers not to dmit them to their homes. The paper writes:

"It was the Apostle of love who, after having reminded his readers bout what they had heard from the beginning - the true Christian reaching -said: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed". Most obviously these words of the Apostle should be applied here. It s not for us to dispute the name of Christian of the individual. Such judgment must be reserved for someone higher, and no doubt many of the "witnesses" are better than their teachers. But it is not a mere accident that the "Jehova's Witnesses" are not part of the ecu-menical movement. They simply could not join it. They are in truth 'Sectarians'."

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A danish missionary lady in Africa, Miss Gurli Vibe-Jensen, has aid a visit to the famous missionary doctor and Nobel Prize winner, r. Albert Schweitzer, at Lambarene. In an interview in the "Kristeligt agblad" she expresses her profound admiration for him as a person, but s severely critical of the way in which he carries out his work. Miss ibe-Jensen says:

"Judging his work from a missionary point of view, I would say that e is probably one of the people most out of step with the demands of ur time and therefore does more harm than good.

His hospital is filled with people who are helped physically and hen leave the hospital, but his work has no African perspective.

He does nothing to make himself superfluous, nor allows his staff ny opportunity of doing so. H e and his white assistants display a antastic activity and make a tremendous effort, but the black man's ontribution is totally lacking. I asked Dr. Schweitzer why he does ot train the Africans to take over the leading posts in the depots, he maternity section, the operation theatres, etc. He answered that he time was not yet ripe for it and that we, by pressing children to houlder the responsibilities and tasks of adults, would ruin the possi- ilities of a natural development of the child.

Such a view is completely antiquated and even most dangerious in he present political game about Africa."

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The prominent clergyman and author, Rev. Gerhard Rasmussen, Copen- agen, has agreed to take charge of the new retreat centre at the count- y seat of "Fuglsang" near Nykøbing on the island of Falster. Mr. Ras- ussen is 55 years of age and is best known in other countries for his ovel "The True Face" which has also been made into a film.

FINLAND

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The election of the new bishop of the Swedish Diocese in Finland n succession to the beloved and by all quarters much appreciated late ishop G.O. Rosenqvist, who died suddenly on June 8th (as mentioned in he last number of CN), is being followed with the keenest interest. everal names in this connection have already been mentioned in the ress and the qualifications most necessary in the new bishop been dis- ussed. The election will probably take place early in September. lergymen and representatives of the parochial councils in the Diocese ave the right of vote and the President of Finland will appoint the ew bishop among those obtaining most votes.

In an editorial on the coming episcopal election the religious eekly of the Swedish speaking Diocese, the "Församlingsbladet", writes:

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The Finnish town of Hamina (Fredrikshamn) has placed a reading room the disposal of the Finnish Mission to Seamen for a period of at ast 25 years. At the official handing over of the property there re speeches by the Mayor, Mr. Viljo Valkeala, and a representative of e Mission to Seamen, Rev. Paavo Hytönen, Rural Dean. Representatives the Seamen's Trade Union and the employers of harbour work likewise dressed the gathering. The reading room will be open to seamen whose ips call at the port, and among the guests at the ceremony were ten dian seamen.

. Gerstenmaier Meets Finnish Churchmen.

The President of the West German Federal Diet in Bonn, Dr. Eugen rstenmaier, recently visited Finland as Head of a delegation of five mbers of the West German Parliament. Dr. Gerstenmaier who, besides ing a politician, is also a theologian of no little influence in the rman Church, took the opportunity to meet several prominent Finnish urchmen, among them the later deceased Bishop G.O. Rosenqvist, Bishop rtti Simojoki, and Dean Oskar Paarma.

niversary of Leading Christian Association.

The Christian Association of Railway Employees in Finland, counting ,000 members, recently celebrated its 60 years' anniversary by a spe- al function at Tampere (Tammerfors). In his address on this occasion he Chairman, Rev. Hannes Kauppinen, Rural Dean, emphasized that the ssociation has been a pioneer organization within modern parochial ork in as much as it was the first one to try to associate members ithin certain industrial branches. The Association has special sub- ections within each section of railway employees, ranging from one for embers of the Railway Board to one for gate keepers at level crossings.

00 Northern Deaconesses Meet at Järvenpää.

At the middle of June 300 deaconesses from the Northern countries et at a rally at the Laymen's Institute at Järvenpää in Finland. At he meeting reports on the situation of diakonia work in the various ountries were read, and there were a number of lectures on religious s well as professional topics. The motto of the rally was: "Behold, Make All Things New".

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At its meeting on June 16th the Norwegian Missionary Council unanim- usly approved the plan for starting an agricultural project in an Afri- an developing country which had been submitted by the Inter-Church Aid rganization (see CN No. 66).

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In advance, several missionary societies had expressed their sgivings about the project as they were afraid it might develop into kind of new missionary society, and that the collection in Norway of nations for the new undertaking might cause difficulties in obtaining ntributions to the old missionary societies.

At the meeting of the Missionary Council a declaration from the ter-Church Aid Organization was presented in which it was pointed t that the project is of a purely humanitarian nature, consisting imarily in providing agricultural experts, that it is intended as a lp to self-help so that the respective local authorities in due time y take over the whole enterprise, and that attempts will be made for nding the means for it - roughly 1 million Norwegian Crowns annually - rough nation-wide drives aiming at awakening the interest of circles ich are not already engaged in ordinary mission work.

On this background the member organizations of the Council whole-artedly approved of the scheme. The Chairman in charge of the work, . Jakob Modalsli, Managing Director, and a graduate in Agriculture ve left for the Camerouns and Nigeria in order to examine the possi-lities for carrying out the plan in one of these countries.

rliamentary Debate on School and Religion.

One of the most extensive debates on the school in the annals of e Norwegian Parliament took place last month, one of the main topics r discussion being the relation between school and religion. The okesmen of all the Opposition Parties and a number of Labour Members vocated strengthening the position of religious instruction in the hool as compared to the syllabus worked out by the Curriculum mmittee some years ago. Several Members emphasized that Christian ucation is the basis of the Norwegian school, as stated in the ob-cts clause of the Education Act.

In an editorial the religious daily paper in Oslo, the "Vårt Land", pleased about the whole development in school matters and about the bate in Parliament. Special attention is drawn to a statement by the nister for Church Affairs and Education, Mr. Helge Sivertsen, who clared himself fully content with the Christian-ethical basis of the hool. At the same time the paper expresses its satisfaction at noting at the Social-Democrats "at long last seem to have grasped the attitude the country's electorate with regard to religious instruction. The nstituents do not want the children to become spiritually under-urished by being fed with the weak and tasteless humane-ethical up aiming at a mass production of anaemic citizens."

ristian Family Consultation Centres in 10 Norwegian Towns in the ar Future.

So far Christian Family Consultation Centres have been established seven Norwegian towns and in the near future three more will be ened in various other places in the country. Everywhere, the Church thorities in charge of the centres have been happy to co-operate with e women's organizations, usually the local women's councils. Such in-rmation was given at a conference in June for representatives of the ristian consultation centres, organized by the Norwegian Congregational stitute. A number of issues of practical as well as fundamental interest re discussed, and the setting up of a permanent co-ordination committee r all the Christian consultation centres was decided upon.

The possibility of Government grants to private family consultation ntres has been much debated in Parliament, but neither the Government the Labour Party feel favourably inclined about it.

Exemption from Taxation of Donations for Charitable Purposes.

The Norwegian Minister of Finance, Mr. Petter Jakob Bjerve, has atly rejected the proposal for exempting from taxation donations humanitarian, cultural, and religious purposes.

oposal for Government Gift for Mission to Seamen.

A Social-Democratic Member of Parliament, Mr. Alfred Thomassen, cently proposed that, on the occasion of the centenary in 1964 of e Norwegian Mission to Seamen, the Norwegian State should give the ssion a substantial grant in acknowledgement of its great work on half of the seamen. The Government will now consider the proposal. e size of the gift is not known, but the sum of 5 million Norwegian owns has been mentioned.

o/o in Favour of Women Pastors.

A recent public opinion poll in Norway revealed that 72 o/o of the pulation are in favour of women pastors, 16 o/o are against, and o/o indifferent to the question. The figures of a similar survey in 46 were 47 o/o, 44 o/o and 9 o/o respectively.

In an editorial the Social-Democratic paper "Arbeiderbladet" main- ins that public opinion has thereby been established. "In a democratic untry the individual must bow to public opinion. This is the principle which our whole social system is based."

In opposition to this the Christian daily paper in Oslo "Vårt Land" aintains that "matters of doctrine, of theological interpretation, and conscience can never be decided on by a majority vote. The question truth must never become a matter to be decided upon by public opinion."

SWEDEN

irst Roman Catholic Convent Since the Reformation.

The Swedish Government has sanctioned the establishment of a Carmel- te convent at Glumslöv in the province of Scania, the first Roman atholic convent in Sweden since the Reformation.

The permission has been given on certain conditions, however. Only ersons above the age of 25 may take the vow, and it must not bar them rom a possible later withdrawal from the convent. The public authorities ust be entitled to visit the convent and keep themselves informed about ts activities, and they must be able to get in direct touch with the ndividual members of the convent. The convent management is finally eminded that the conventual vow must not entail any curtailment of the ersonal freedom which Swedish law guarantees all Swedish citizens.

The establishment of the new convent has been liberally commented on n the daily as well as the religious Press. Thus the weekly of the vangelical National Missionary Society, the "Budbäraren", writes:

"It must be made clear that the only reasonable procedure is to arry out the principles of the law about freedom of religion to its ullest extent. If it is legal to set up atheistic associations of arious kinds in our country, it would be unreasonable to put obstacles

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the way of the practising of Roman piety. Once and for all we must ce the fact that our social system leaves us no possibility, through ercion legislation, to safeguard against ideas which we consider un- sirable. Since the Constitution ensures freedom of faith, thought, d speech there can be no legitimate reason for introducing coercive asures against one particular faith and doctrine. Modern heathenism nnot be fought by prohibition. Catholicizing tendencies in the Swe- sh Church cannot be countered by forbidding convents and monasteries."

w Distribution of Parishes Comes into Effect.

The Swedish Government has now passed the Act about a new distri- tion of parishes in the Lutheran National Church with effect as from nuary 1st, 1962. The new distribution has been prepared for during e last 11 years and entails a decrease in the number of parishes from 684 to 2,656. Many parishes with few inhabitants will be joined to- ther and big parishes divided into smaller ones. According to the w Act, Stockholm will have 30 more clergymen than hitherto. The new rangement will entail great difficulties, on the other hand, in rishes where one clergyman will be in charge of 3-4 small congrega- ons in the sparsely populated country districts where distances often e considerable.

9 Million Swedish Crowns for Developing Countries.

The Swedish Parliament has voted 39 million Swedish Crowns this ar in aid of developing countries as compared to 21 million Crowns st year. Several Parties were in favour of a further increase of million Crowns, but Government turned it down on the ground that the lief administration in the developing countries was not yet so big nd well organized as to be able to put such an increase to the best ssible advantage and proper use. All the Parties were in favour, owever, of gradually increasing the aid to developing countries to o/o of the national income, which would amount to 700 million Swedish rowns.

In the course of the debate, Mrs. Ulla Lindström, Member of the abinet, said that there could be no objection to the Foreign Missions eceiving part of the aid to developing countries, but she felt that uch money should be taken from the voluntary contribution to the Sweden Helps" programme.

he Helander-Case to be Reopened.

In 1953 the Bishop of Strängnäs Dr. Dick H elander was sentenced o dismissal from his office after the courts had found him guilty of aving written, multiplied, and distributed about 500 anonymous letters hich were libellous on other candidates at the episcopal election. ishop Helander, who never admitted having had anything to do with the nonymous letters, two years ago moved for a new trial. Although in arch 1961 the Public Prosecutor moved the rejection of Bishop Helander's otion the Supreme Court now has decided with 4 votes against 3 that the ase shall be reopened.

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in the way of the practising of Roman piety. Once and for all we must face the fact that our social system leaves us no possibility, through coercion legislation, to safeguard against ideas which we consider undesirable. Since the Constitution ensures freedom of faith, thought, and speech there can be no legitimate reason for introducing coercive measures against one particular faith and doctrine. Modern Mormonism cannot be fought by prohibition. Catholicizing tendencies in the Swedish Church cannot be countered by forbidding convents and monasteries."

New Distribution of Parishes Come into Effect.

The Swedish Government has now passed the Act about a new distribution of parishes in the Lutheran National Church with effect as from January 1st, 1962. The new distribution has been prepared for during the last 11 years and entails a decrease in the number of parishes from 2,681 to 2,656. Many parishes with few inhabitants will be joined together and big parishes divided into smaller ones. According to the new Act, Stockholm will have 30 more clergymen than hitherto. The new arrangement will entail great difficulties, on the other hand, in parishes where one clergyman will be in charge of 3-4 small congregations in the sparsely populated country districts where distances often are considerable.

99 Million Swedish Crowns for Developing Countries.

The Swedish Parliament has voted 99 million Swedish Crowns this year in aid of developing countries as compared to 21 million Crowns last year. Several Parties were in favour of a further increase of 10 million Crowns, but Government turned it down on the ground that the relief administration in the developing countries was not yet so big and well organized as to be able to put such an increase to the best possible advantage and proper use. All the Parties were in favour, however, of gradually increasing the aid to developing countries to 1% of the national income, which would amount to 700 million Swedish Crowns.

In the course of the debate, Mrs. Ulla Lindström, Member of the Cabinet, said that there could be no objection to the Foreign Missions receiving part of the aid to developing countries, but she felt that much money should be taken from the voluntary contribution to the "Sweden Helps" programme.

The Bjelander-Case to be Reopened.

In 1953 the Bishop of Strängnäs Dr. Dick H Bjelander was sentenced to dismissal from his office after the courts had found him guilty of having written, multiplied, and distributed about 500 anonymous letters which were libellous on other candidates at the episcopal election. Bishop Bjelander, who never admitted having had anything to do with the anonymous letters, two years ago moved for a new trial. Although in March 1961 the Public Prosecutor moved the rejection of Bishop Bjelander's motion the Supreme Court now has decided with 4 votes against 3 that the case shall be reopened.

Literature:

In the paragraph in the last number of CM on "Uninterrupted Communion with the Anglican Church" there was a mistake which altered the sense. The last sentence should read: "... the resolution requests the House of Bishops "not the Houses of Bishops" to avoid Anglican participation in Swedish episcopal consecrations until the situation in the Swedish National Church has been more clarified."